

Message Text

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UNCLAS QUEBEC 0125

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJ: FIRST STEPS FOR CLAUDE RYAN

REF: QUEBEC 0121

1. CLAUDE RYAN SAID YESTERDAY THAT HE WILL CONSULT WITH THE LIBERAL CAUCUS BEFORE DECIDING WHETHER TO SEEK A SEAT IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. SPEAKING AT HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE SINCE HIS ELECTION TO THE PROVINCIAL LIBERAL PARTY LEADERSHIP APRIL 15, RYAN ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT FORMER LEADER GERARD D. LEVESQUE WOULD STAY ON AS PARLIAMENTARY CHIEF. AS FOR HIS DEFEATED OPPONENT, RAYMOND GARNEAU, RYAN SAID THAT HE HOPED GARNEAU WOULD REMAIN IN OFFICE "FOR A LONG TIME," ADDING THAT LEVESQUE AS TO WHETHER GARNEAU WOULD CONTINUE TO FUNCTION AS THE OPPOSITION'S FINANCE CRITIC.

2. COMMENT: IF PRESS ATTENTION IS ANY MEASURE OF THE LIBERALS' REVIVED FORTUNES UNDER THEIR NEW LEADER, RYAN IS OFF TO A FAST START. THE CHATEAU FRONTENAC WAS OVERFLOWING WITH NEWSMEN FOR HIS CONFERENCE, OVER 500 MEDIA PEOPLE BY ONE COUNT, AND THE EXCITEMENT LEVEL WAS HIGH. RYAN'S DECISION NOT TO MOVE JUST YET ON THE QUESTION OF RUNNING FOR A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
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SEAT IS A WISE ONE, SINCE THERE ARE STRONG ARGUMENTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE QUESTION. SEVERAL RYAN ADVISORS ARE URGING HIM TO STAY OUT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HOTHOUSE FOR THE MOMENT, AND TO DEVOTE HIS EFFORTS TO CONSOLIDATING PARTY UNITY BEFORE GOING NOSE TO NOSE WITH THE PQ ON THE ASSEMBLY FLOOR. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT RYAN WILL HAVE TO BE SAFELY SEATED IN THE ASSEMBLY BY NEXT FALL, HOWEVER, BY WHICH TIME IT IS LIKELY THAT LIVE TV

COVERAGE OF THE PROCEEDINGS WILL START. AS FOR PARTY UNITY, THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS AT THE MOMENT THAT THE HARD-FOUGHT LEADERSHIP CAMPAIGN HAS SERIOUSLY FRACTURED THE PARTY, DESPITE SOME HARD FEELINGS IN THE GARNEAU CAMP. GARNEAU HIMSELF CHOKED BACK SOME BITTERNESS AND APPEALED TO HIS FOLLOWERS TO SUPPORT THE WINNER. BUT RYAN EARNED HIS FIRST POST-VICTORY LUMPS IN THE PRESS, ALBEIT MILD ONES, FOR HIS FAILURE TO MAKE A WARM GESTURE TOWARD GARNEAU IN HIS VICTORY SPEECH. WE SUSPECT THAT RYAN MAY STILL BE PRICKLY ABOUT A COUPLE OF BARBS THROWN HIS WAY DURING GARNEAU'S SPEECH TO THE CONVENTION MOMENTS BEFORE SATURDAY'S VOTE (AMONG OTHER THINGS, GARNEAU REFERRED TO RYAN OBLIQUELY AS AN "OPPORTUNIST" ATTRACTED BY POWER). DESPITE CLOSE QUESTIONING BY THE PRESS, RYAN WAS NOT MUCH MORE ACCOMODATING TO GARNEAU AT YESTERDAY'S PRESS CONFERENCE. HE WILL HAVE TO MAKE SOME GESTURE SOON, SINCE GARNEAU WILL IN ALL LIKELIHOOD BE RESPONDING FOR THE LIBERALS WHEN PQ FINANCE MINISTER JACQUES PARIZEAU TABLES HIS NEW BUDGET TUESDAY AFTERNOON.
MCNAMARA

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